



Goal Area of the Activity

To increase the participation of all U.S. underrepresented groups – women, African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and persons with disabilities – in science, engineering, and technology.

Brief Summary

BEST is a public-private partnership established in 2001 with federal seed funding from the National Science Foundation and seven other federal agencies and private sector funding from QUALCOMM. The mission of BEST is to follow up the national call to action of the Congressional Commission on the Advancement of Women and Minorities in Science Engineering Development.

Work Program

Over the past year, BEST has created a foundation for action by conducting a national assessment of best practices to expand the demographic base of the U.S. technical workforce across the full continuum of workforce development. The assessment has engaged more than 100 nationally recognized practitioners, policy makers, and researchers in three blue ribbon panels on pre-K-12, higher education, and the professional workplace.

Accomplishments/Results

BEST's blue ribbon panel on pre-K-12 has set as its objective to determine how much and what kinds of evidence can substantiate claims that pre-K-12 math and science programs are effective in developing the talent of students from groups under-represented in technical fields. With support from the American Institutes for Research, the panel has developed a protocol to evaluate evidence of best practice and has identified 34 potential exemplar programs. AIR is applying the protocol to these programs. Its findings will be the centerpiece of an evidence-based consumers' guide to what is working to prepare and motivate BEST's target groups in math and science. The guide will focus not only of evidence of effectiveness, but also on the shared characteristics of standout programs.

Plans for the Next 12 Months

BEST will present the Pre-K-12 Blue Ribbon Panel's report to Congress in Fall 2003. BEST will then launch a community engagement initiative whose goal will be to translate into action BEST's foundation of knowledge regarding best practices.